Revised Edition

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Section II

CONFERENCE ON CHURCH, COMMUNITY AND STATE

DRAFT REPORT ON

THE CHURCH AND THE STATE

NOTE

This draft has been prepared by the Chairman of the Section in the light of such consultation as circumstances permitted with advisers in different countries. Its purpose is to provide a basis for discussion when the Section meets. It is not to be taken as representing the views of the Conference, and does not commit the Conference in any way. The Conference is free to adopt, amend or reject the draft in any way that it pleases. For this reason the draft is a confidential document. No public reference must be made to its contents or quotations made from it. There is no objection to those who write about the Conference indicating in a general way and in their own words the kind of questions that are likely to engage the attention of the Conference.

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ST. CLEMENTS PRESS LTD.,
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THE CHURCH AND THE STATE

FORM AND PURPOSE OF THE MEMORANDUM

1. The purpose of this memorandum is to serve as a basis for discussion in the second section of the Oxford World Conference on Church, Community and State. Thus the special aim of the memorandum must be to determine the selection of the questions to which our attention must be turned; it must also determine the manner in which they are discussed. From the large number of important and burning problems which arise out of the contact of the Church of Christ with the State of the present day, the memorandum attempts to single out those which are of central importance and oecumenical significance, because only thus can the subject be properly treated in the short time at the disposal of the section. Further, the lack of fundamental clarity and stability which characterises the attitude of the Churches and of individual Christians to political questions makes it necessary that the discussion should be mainly concerned with the fundamental principles of the Christian witness concerning Church and State. Although it is obvious that in so doing the present situation with its actual difficulties must be borne in mind, the discussion should not start here; it should begin with the unchanging facts of the Divine revelation, as contrasted with changing events in time and space. In this memorandum, therefore, we are more concerned with the ultimate spiritual decisions which determine the relations between the Christian Church and the contemporary State than with the details of a programme of action; such questions can scarcely be adequately discussed by an oecumenical assembly.

2. The oecumenical character of the Conference also means that the memorandum dare not lose sight of the variety and even the contradictory character of the various Christian convictions involved. With a balanced and realistic view of the actual situation within Christendom, the memorandum must try to bring out clearly both the agreements and the far-reaching differences in the Christian attitude at important points—in the hope that it may be granted to the Conference itself, through the exchange of convictions and experiences,

and in a humble and teachable spirit, to gain a deeper common knowledge of the will of God at this critical hour in world history.

3. The memorandum consists of four parts. Simply for purposes of information, the first part emphasises certain factors and tendencies which are significant for the realistic understanding of the life of the State at the present day. In the second part a series of questions will be suggested which seem to require the Church, and its members throughout the whole world, to adopt a definite attitude. In its third and central section the memorandum tries to present the Christian position, in some of its main features. Finally, the fourth section suggests certain possible practical conclusions and concrete tasks.

I. SOME FACTS AND TENDENCIES IN THE PRESENT SITUATION

4. One of the most important factors in the present world situation is the increasing significance of the State in life as a whole; this comes out clearly not only in a great extension of its sphere of competence, but also in a glorification of the claims of the State. Any attempt to understand and to estimate this fact cannot avoid considering its close connection with the complete transformation of all ideas and values, now affecting all spheres of life, which we are experiencing at the present time—a transformation of which the political development is both a result and a contributory cause.

(a) Destruction and Reconstruction in the Mass Civilisation of the Present Day

5. It ought to be taken for granted that among thinking men and women throughout the world the conviction is widespread that the present breakdown of traditional institutions and values and the present birth-pangs of new forms of human action and social life do not merely represent one of the usual cyclic fluctuations in the course of history, which recur from time to time. They are signs of a very deep transformation of life as a whole, and it would be useless to try to prophesy in what direction this will lead or what its results will be. But this sense of being involved in a period of

world-wide upheaval and transformation, which is certainly confirmed by the shattering experiences of recent years, gives to our reflection on our responsibility to-day a sense of extreme urgency.

6. With ruthless clarity the world war and the post-war period have laid bare the widespread disintegration of Western civilisation. The industrialisation and technical development which took place during the last century, under the influence of the amazing progress in the natural sciences, did not only assist social progress, it also produced questionable results. The traditional ties and forms of society which give the individual a sense that he "belongs" to, and has organic roots in a certain district, have been exposed—in our period of urbanisation and of active international intercourse—to a process of ruthless disintegration. Customs and usages which give a community form and stability and were not felt by the individual as fetters, but gave him security and guidance from the storehouse of the wisdom of his ancestors, are being swept away by new ideals and new modes of thought. The expansion of the apparatus of production which has been made possible by modern technique—which, however, has not solved the problem of providing humanity with sustenance—is overshadowed by the spectre of unemployment. Thus the common life of the present day is penetrated through and through with disintegrating and centrifugal forces. The growth of natural communities where man is "at home" in the full sense of the word, has been checked or destroyed by the enforced concentration of isolated individuals in anonymous masses, where dumb resignation or revolutionary resentment become the prevailing sentiments. The development of unions and parties, as well as of the popular press, which has been such a marked feature of social life from the nineteenth century onwards, means that to a far greater extent than ever before, masses of human beings are now acquainted with the problems and the needs of the day, which thus increases the political significance of the latter.

7. The dialectical character of all political events stands out very clearly at the present time when a new form of the State and of the economic order is coming into being, as a result of the decay of the previous forms, and indeed, owing to its own inherent autonomy, actually overreaches itself and produces further changes. We would, however, draw a completely false picture were we to draw attention only to these disintegrating tendencies. Powerful counter-movements are resisting the forces of destruction and are struggling for a new

spirit of community and for new forms of life. This comes out very plainly in the efforts of the youth movements in all countries. The inborn longing of man for community and fidelity sets itself against the unchartered freedom and individualistic atomism of our day. At the same time, however, it must be recognised that these movements tend to fall into the other extreme. The efforts to find a way out of the intolerable strain and difficulty of the life of our day also tend—whether unconsciously or openly proclaimed—to deny the positive achievements of past generations. In many places the ideals of freedom, equality, self-determination, tolerance, and the newly-awakened ideals of authority, obedience, sacrifice and surrender to the whole are regarded as mutually exclusive. Another fact is closely bound up with this. The various forces which are trying to check the process of widespread disintegration try to concentrate upon a particular section of life which is then proclaimed, with arrogant exclusiveness, as the centre of a new order. The class, the people, the State, or some other entity is given an absolute value and makes totalitarian claims. It demands and receives full surrender and unconditional loyalty.

8. The process of destruction and reconstruction which we have just mentioned is at different stages of development in particular countries. Owing to the effects, or after-effects, of the War, even externally, profound changes have taken place. These upheavals have been very different, both in their spirit and temper and in their aims. This is due to the fact that their historical and cultural background was so different. Common to them all, however, is the determination —aided by all the methods provided by political power and modern technique—to build up a new order upon a totalitarian basis, and to bring both individuals and social groups under the firm and uniform control of the collective body. Other countries, in which the forms of the State developed in the nineteenth century have remained outwardly the same, or at least, have been altered very little, and where the decline of the traditional forms of life has not yet affected the dominant classes in political and cultural life to the same extent, are apparently in a transitional stage of comparative stability. But here too the signs of change—social, political and moral —are evident.

(b) The Influence of Secularism and Political 'Myths'

9. These disturbances in the life of civilisation as a whole are indissolubly interwoven with a spiritual and ethical upheaval whose roots lie in the distant past, but whose effects

can be discerned particularly clearly in our own generation. We are confronted by the fact that great numbers of human beings are under the influence of an ever-increasing irreligious secularism, which—after a period of widespread indifference to the Christian Faith—is becoming increasingly articulate and is penetrating more and more widely into life itself. The connection of this phenomenon with the Renaissance and the Enlightenment is well known. It has been intensified by modern natural science which produced the belief in the possibility of solving all human problems by constructive intelligence and by material means. Further, we must never forget that the necessity to concentrate all one's energies upon the effort to secure a bare living wage—which represents the content of life for countless human beings—deadens their spiritual and moral faculties. The effort to achieve a measure of outward security, the endeavour to gain individual and collective happiness, are predominating ideals which also determine the ethical attitude of the community. In some countries, however, this secularism becomes transformed into an aggressive and intolerant atheism.

10. A new element in this situation is the fact that this wave of secularism which, owing to the destruction of traditional religious ideas and ethical values, has produced a spiritual vacuum, accompanied by the emergence of new religious movements, as well as by the revival of old religions and their deliberate imposition upon public life. The religious longing of the soul breaks through with elemental force and is expressed in movements which are supported by ardent passion and by the intoxication of surrender to the whole. Thus in a number of important states, the ' myth ' element which, under the influence of the ultra-rationalistic thought of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, had disappeared, has reappeared in political life. The individual personality of the Leader of the State has also gained new meaning. Owing to the variety of principles incorporated into and expressed in the life of particular nations, international tension is accentuated by ideological contradictions which are evident in the political life of many countries.

(c) The Depreciation and the Glorification of Political Authority

11. The intensive struggle for political power, for the meaning and the purpose of the State in human life, is part and parcel of the confusing blend of contradictory purposes and mutually hostile forces which characterises this period

of extensive change. On the one hand, the process of secularisation and increasing disintegration has invaded the sphere of the State, has robbed it of its religious glamour, and has made political authority merely a method to be used in the competition between private and collective interests. The proclamation of an untrammelled individualism, the preponderance of economic aims, the unchecked exploitation of parliamentary institutions for the persecution of group and class interests, and of political liberties for revolutionary movements, are some of the factors which, in many lands have helped to undermine political authority and have produced the danger of political impotence and universal anarchy. To a large extent respect for law and order has disappeared. Frequently the State, which ought to have been able to check this process of general disintegration, has not done so, indeed, sometimes it has even helped to accelerate this process.

12. In this respect the swing of the pendulum has come with amazing rapidity. In several countries groups or parties, impelled by a passionate sense of "mission," have seized political power by means of revolution, and have not lost a moment in consolidating and strengthening their position. The longing of the masses for a new order of life, whatever form it may assume, if only it promises to relieve the intolerable strain of their social and political condition, has given the impetus to this renewed belief in the State. Thus the new State—as a powerful body which supports and fulfils collective aspirations, and as a helper in time of urgent need—is acclaimed with gratitude, homage and surrender. More and more powerfully the State is asserting and enforcing its claim on man. In many places, however, this new estimate of, and actual increase in the power of the State goes much further. Just as, long ago, men were familiar with the ruler who claimed absolute homage or divine honours—whether in the pagan self-glorification of Caesar worship or under the cloak of the 'Christian' ruler and 'protector'—so to-day the principle of personal rule and individual responsibility for the direction of the State has been reborn. World philosophies, old and new, provide the theoretical apparatus for this cult of the State and strengthen its emotional appeal. The lack of any moral basis for political life, which placed the ruling authority on a plane beyond the sphere of good and evil and, owing to the decay of the *Corpus Christianum* and to the growth of secularism was almost universally recognised, has been replaced by political ideologies, which, by elevating a collective social entity to the rank of a supreme value, establish a new political ethic. The State becomes the bearer of a myth.

(d) The Emergence of Totalitarian Tendencies

13. The dangerous character of this general intensification of the power of the State, both in theory and practice, is due to the fact that in many countries it is connected with a totalitarian claim. It is true, of course, that at earlier periods in history, the State has sometimes extended its claim beyond the political and legal sphere into the sphere of personal and social life. The principle of sovereignty, which is supremely essential to the modern state, is potentially totalitarian; the State itself determines its sphere of authority. In the age of absolutism and religious intolerance the State exercised its influence over wide spheres of personal and corporate life, and the democratic and liberal movements of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were essentially a reaction against this absolutism. The nineteenth and twentieth centuries, with their economic and social problems and the increased financial power of the State, came to believe more and more in the effectiveness of State regulations. Yet it was only during and after the World War that this tendency extended once more to the spiritual sphere, claiming the right to mould man as a whole, and in certain countries tried to achieve an actual " totality."

14. The distinctive character of this phenomenon is aptly described in the following words: " The totalitarian State is a State which lays claim to man in the totality of his being; which declares its authority to be the source of all authority; which refuses to recognise the independence, in their own sphere, of religion, culture, education and the family; which seeks to impose on all its citizens a particular philosophy of life; and which sets out to create by means of all the agencies of public information and education a particular type of man in accordance with its own understanding of the meaning and end of man's existence."* As a reaction against a confusing medley of ideals and systems and a still more widespread lack of political ideas, the sole authority of a definite ideology is established. The welfare of the proletariat, the self-development of the State, the honour of the nation or of the race becomes the supreme norm for thought and action, and erects the standard by which right and wrong, truth and untruth, are judged. The strong centralisation of political power, the modern art of organisation, and the new methods of propaganda make it possible, as never before, to reach and influence the population of a country as a whole, and at the same time to exert a systematic influence upon the secret sources of human instincts and values according to the dictates of the totalitarian will.

* J. H. Oldham: Church, Community and State: A World Issue. p. 9.

15. To limit our attention, however, to particular countries would distort our outlook. Totalitarianism is a universal phenomenon in the world of the present day, although it varies in form and intensity. Even in countries where the ideology of liberalism and parliamentarian democracy is predominant, economic and political forces are at work which contribute to the formation of a stricter governmental control of the economic sphere, of public opinion, and of national morals, and to a greater unification of the community as a whole. Even where the State does not influence man directly, nor try to suppress ecclesiastical or other free organisations, the claim of the citizen —which is continually growing—for popular education and for public services, and the increasing burden of taxation, constitutes an actual and increasing suppression of the free self-chosen activity of individuals. In this connection the close relations between totalitarianism and war are of special importance. Not only have several totalitarian systems of government arisen out of the World War, but for all the warring nations the World War meant an experiment in the totalitarian control of all the functions of society, to an extent unparalleled in world history. Similarly, the fear of the next war, and the military necessity for keeping the nation permanently prepared for this terrible possibility, acts as a powerful stimulus in all countries to the growth of totalitarian tendencies.

(e) The Relation of the State to the Church

16. It is a sign of the times that more and more frequently the Church situation of our own day is compared with the pre-Constantine period. The reason for this comparison, however, does not lie mainly in the fact that in certain countries the Christian Church—and not only certain confessions which are not tolerated—is being persecuted or threatened with suppression; no, it is justified chiefly because the Christian Church is now confronted by masses of people who are alienated from her, either in a spirit of indifference or of active hostility. The remarkable, and—at bottom—contradictory character of the relation between Church and State becomes manifest when we remind ourselves of the main features of its development in Western lands.

After the freedom of the suffering Church, which had existed even in the pre-Constantine period, had been restored by the recognition and the protection of the State, to a large extent the Church became dependent on the State, and was helpless in its clutches. It was only after the medieval state had been weakened by feudalism, and the power of a state controlled

by the will of a single ruler had been broken up into a variety of contractual relations between classes and corporations, that a progressive emancipation of the Church became possible. The fact that the Church, as a result of the weakness of the State, itself gained temporal power and was thus able to confront the State on a footing of equality as an independent authority, endangered its own inmost nature. As soon as the modern State —in the fifteenth century—began to develop its sovereignty, it endeavoured—and with success—to re-assert its dominion over the Church within its territory by means of the *jus reformandi.* Religious divisions brought the churches into closer touch with and dependence upon the State, with at the same time, a spirit of wide-spread intolerance against churches which were not recognised. Even after the ruling classes, as a result of the Enlightenment, had to some extent drifted away from the Church, the old close relation between Church and State still existed. It was not until the nineteenth century that this bond was loosened, and the religious neutrality of the liberal state was an essential element in this process of secularisation. It is true, of course, that at the present time in certain countries the attitude of the State is not only tolerant, but in a varying degree it is also friendly, and fruitful co-operation would still be possible. But here, too, the increasing secularisation of political life is bearing its own fruit. Almost unnoticeably the Church is being gradually brought under the control of the State, since the aid of the Church is seldom sought for its own sake, but it is only regarded as useful for the welfare of the State, or as part of the historical inheritance of the nation. Thus modern States are severing themselves from the Christian sphere of influence. Many have already gone a step further, and have deprived the churches of those official rights formerly granted them by the State, thus placing the churches in an entirely new situation, and one which, especially from the economic point of view, is peculiarly difficult. The situation of the Church is still more difficult where the ideology championed by the State conflicts with the claim of the Church for freedom to organise her own life and work, and to proclaim her message without any adaptation to the general outlook of the classes which direct the affairs of the State. Where an aggressive atheism is rampant within a State the repression of the Church and a return to pre-Constantine conditions are inevitable.

II. THE CONCERN OF THE CHURCH

17. Such a diagnosis of the present life of the State does not give the Church any reason to indulge in a pharisaical

complacency. The Church itself is involved in this whole situation. It is itself part and parcel of this lost world, with its absolutisms and its heresies, its inadequacy and its rebellion against God. If the Church of the present day feels impelled to pass a clear and unambiguous judgment, both upon the political situation of the day and upon its own responsibilities, this can only take place in a spirit of the deepest humility and sympathetic solidarity. The summons of the Church : " Repent and believe the Gospel," is above all a summons to itself and to each of its own members. The Church is forced to recognise that the present situation, with all its suffering and its distress, with all its despairing attempts to create in its own strength a world remote from God, is a judgment upon itself. The Church must confess : *mea culpa.* Its inward weakness and division, its lack of trust in the power of its Lord to conquer the evil in the heart of man and in the world, its unreadiness to face the facts and the problems of a new period in history, have to a great extent prevented it from proclaiming the good news of the divine salvation with convincing authority. The Church has taken too little trouble to show, and to make visible in its own life, the meaning of the fact that " the Kingdom of God is come among you "—a fact of incomparable significance for all mankind as well as for man as a whole—in the life of the State as a sanctifying and creative force. In the totalitarian tendencies of the present day the Church must therefore humbly acknowledge that it sees itself convicted of its own limited outlook and false spirituality.

18. The relations between Church and State include a large number of questions which require new insight and resolute action. In such a rapidly shifting situation as the present, when traditional solutions and experiences of the past are being thrown into the melting pot, the Church must reconsider the central statements which express its understanding of its own nature and of the world. Unless it does so it will be exposed to the danger of becoming untrue to itself, while at the same time it will be unable to give any actual help and direction to men and women who are involved in the concrete difficulties of political life. It is, however, evident that in political matters at almost every point Christian witness and action is uncertain and divided. The most important contribution, therefore, which the discussion of this section of the Oxford Conference can make to a better understanding of the mission of the Church to the State of the present day will consist in guiding men's minds to the decisive problems which emerge in the present situation, and in the attempt to make clear what is the distinctively Christian attitude towards them.

19. There are three groups of facts in the life of the contemporary State to which the Church should give particular attention.

A. The Christian Sanction of the State

The intensification of political authority in the direction of absolutism and myth, its claim upon absolute fidelity and surrender, and, at the same time, the opposite tendencies to minimise or even to deny, the rights of the State, have drawn fresh attention to the question of the sanction of political authority. What is the point of supreme social authority and by what right does the State claim to be this point? What is the purpose of the State in the providential government of the world by God?

B. The Tasks of the State and Christian Responsibility

In the modern community the functions of the State are extremely comprehensive and varied. Not only does the State guard the nation from attack from without, but it also preserves law and order within its own borders. It takes the economic sphere and science under its protection. It is vitally interested in the education of the rising generation and in the religious and moral life of the nation. By means of its decisions, by means of its attitude towards the varied interests of the community, whether positive or negative, it guides the whole according to its will. But since Christian loyalty cannot mean absolute submission to the will of the State, and since in most civil concerns a good deal of scope is left to personal responsibility, the problem immediately arises: What is the Christian way in the midst of all the warring claims and purposes of political life? Does the Christian understanding of life throw any light upon the tasks of the State and upon the way in which they ought to be carried out?

C. The Limits of the Sphere controlled by the State and the Problem of Freedom

The enormous extension of the sphere controlled by the State in the course of the last hundred years, and especially the totalitarian tendencies which have arisen since the World War, constitute a danger and a problem which, from many

points of view, is quite new. Where should the line be drawn which defines the limits of the authority of the State ? Can this line be drawn by the State itself in an arbitrary manner, owing to the fact that it wields supreme authority over the community ? Or is there a freedom of the various functions of life over against the State, which the State injures at its own peril ? What freedom within the framework of the political order, and, if necessary even against the encroachments of the State, must the Church maintain as absolutely necessary for the right fulfilment of its own mission ?

III. THE ATTITUDE OF THE CHURCH

A. The Christian Sanction of the State

(a) The Impossibility of Evading this Question

20. The question of the State is one of the most serious and difficult problems confronting Christian faith and action; for at all times the State has been a matter of extreme importance to man, and he has never been able to ignore it. From its earliest days the Christian community has struggled to understand what the Incarnation, Crucifixion and Resurrection of its Lord means for its own existence in its contact with actual governments, as well as for its own estimate of political life. In the words and deeds of its Lord in the Gospels, in the rest of the ethical teaching of the New Testament, in the conduct of the great men of God of the Old Covenant, in the guidance of the Holy Spirit in the course of history, one generation of Christians after another has sought to find practical guidance for its own political action. Sometimes Christians have sought to subordinate the State to theocratic principles. Sometimes they have only seen behind the State the cruel or treacherous vision of the Devil, and while outwardly yielding passive obedience, inwardly they have withdrawn from the State and all its works. To them power and violence seem wholly incompatible with selfless love and Christian humility. But in the midst of all these varying attitudes there is one sentiment which has been constant and operative, and that is the consciousness that the State cannot be indifferent towards the Church or towards the individual Christian. The message of Scripture speaks too loudly to be ignored and says too plainly that even the actual sphere of political life has to do with God.

(b) The Variety in the Christian Attitude

21. These various attitudes towards the State point to fundamental divergences of opinion within the Church in its understanding of the distinctive character of its message, and of its mission to the world. Sometimes these divergences are based upon the fact that Christians have been content to allow their views to be determined by isolated statements from the Bible (like passages from the Sermon on the Mount or some of the sayings of St. Paul), or even by their own historical experiences. On the other hand, the dominant political theory of any period, and especially the attitude of the political authorities to the Church, has been reflected in the Christian attitude, and has to a large extent helped to form it. Consequently even the judgment of the political situation and of the practical value of the State has acted as a divisive element, which, right down the centuries—and not only in the tensions of the last century between the State Churches and the Free Churches—has caused great harm to the Christian community as a whole. The divergent conceptions, not only of the Church, but also of the State, bring an undesirable element of division and weakness into the Christian position.

22. Thus, at the present time, when the question of the meaning of political sovereignty is being asked everywhere, with a new urgency, it is all the more important that the central questions which lie behind the variety of theories, unreflective attitudes and instinctive reactions, should be made clear and should find a genuinely Christian answer. In view of the political tendencies and forces which deliberately deny the claim of Christ to be sovereign over the whole creation it is our absolute duty to ask ourselves this question: What are the main elements which constitute Christianity as well as the State?

23. It is as members of the Church that we are concerned with the problem of the State. The new communion with God and with our fellow men which the living Christ grants to us in His Church is the given fact which must be normative for all our thought and action, even in political matters. All Christian efforts to deal with the problem of the State are confronted by this question: Will they allow themselves to be absolutely determined by this unique fact? This struggle to discover the will of God for the State takes many different forms. Many Christians are convinced that the Church—as the sole and rightful exponent of the divine law which is implanted in the nature of things—possesses the authoritative word which it has the right to utter, not only about the motives

which determine our attitude within the political order, but also about the purpose and the nature of the State itself. Similarly, in the collective testimony of the Bible, others find not only standards for the exercise of Christian responsibility in politics, but also a deeper insight into the constituent elements of political life greater than that which ordinary reason and political experience can give. Others again believe that the Christian message does not imply any new interpretation of the meaning of the State, but simply that it gives certain directions to guide the personal attitude of the Christian within the political order. But in spite of these differences all are agreed that political responsibility should not and must not lose contact with the present actual state of affairs but that it must spring from a Christian and political realism. Faith reckons with what the State is, but it does not pronounce existing conditions sacred.

(c) What is the State?

24. A sober estimate of facts, philosophical theories, ethical judgments, all combine, in a confusing way, to form the common view of the State. It is important to lay emphasis upon this fact because when we see it we understand many of the divergent opinions which are found within the Christian attitude to the State. Two Christians, for instance, who both hold the same form of religious belief, may differ widely in their attitude towards the State. One, for instance, may regard the State as the necessary and organic form of human social life. The other may see in it chiefly its harsh power of coercion. This being so, these two Christians must inevitably form different opinions about the concrete questions of political ethics. The historical situation also in which political action must be taken, must not be ignored—an element which is not irrelevant for Christian thought.

25. There are three elements which are generally regarded as constituting the State, in its modern civilised form: a people organised as a society within one territory, sovereign power, and a legal system. Organised sovereignty belongs to the nature of the State. The maintenance and the strengthening of power which has been gained, as well as the struggle to impose new claims to authority, forms part of its life. Sovereignty is essential to political power: in its own sphere as well as in the regulation of its relations with other States it tolerates no opposition to its decisions, save as the expression of obligations voluntarily incurred, and even then only

within the limits of the self-preservation of the State. By every means at its disposal it tries to enforce its purposes, even if necessary by the application of force in its extreme form. It makes sovereign decisions about the property, liberty and life of its subjects. In an irrational and incalculable way it follows the law of its own self-development.

26. By means of its power the State at least creates external order within its own sphere of sovereignty. The State enacts its own law, and it can alter its law if this seems required in order to carry out its purpose. But the very fact that it asserts its own power requires the institution of permanent forms of authority, legislation and administration of justice. The exercise of political power, however, is not arbitrary caprice. It is subject to a higher norm. Might pre-supposes right, but at the same time, whether consciously or unconsciously, the feeling for justice as an impelling and defining motive, works out in the political balance of rival social forces. The State is the struggle for sovereign power, but it also represents the effort to establish a just order.

27. At the present time great emphasis is being laid upon the fact that the State is organically connected with a national community. The State is the organisation of a community, and as such it is not only related to law and order but also to the organic development of the national life as a whole, to culture and the general philosophy of life, to national customs and usages, etc. It does not only include the polarity of rulers and ruled, but it is a complex structure of social relations and mutual responsibilities and services.

(d) The Christian Argument for the State

28. Throughout the centuries Christendom has continually emphasised the fact that the political order, however it may be conceived, is not a sphere of human action which is unrelated to God. Christendom has held firmly to the testimony of the Bible that God is at work even in political life. It has regarded the paradoxical attitude of the Early Church as in harmony with the real state of affairs. On the one hand the New Testament regards the State as a divine institution which has a definite part to play within the divine plan of salvation. On the other hand, in veiled and obscure language, it insinuates that diabolical forces are at work in the political sphere. These religious statements, namely, that the function of politics is a manifestation of the divine will, and that it is constantly being distorted and misused, are fundamental for the political

ethos and have important implications. The State has a definite sanction. Its authority and its dignity are based upon this fact. But it is not a self-end nor a final end. It exists to serve the purposes of God. Thus, all political action is confronted by the inevitable alternative: Does it wish to be an instrument of, or an obstacle to, the gracious rule of God?

29. When, however, we try to develop this fundamentally Christian view of the State in greater detail, we find extreme differences of opinion. Many Christians regard the State as an expression of the divine law which penetrates the universe as a whole. The State is an order based upon the human need for social life and serves the purpose of ensuring order, peace, and temporal welfare for the community. The divine law in the nature of things is both the origin and the criterion of all political life. It is an ideal which lays practical obligations upon mankind. But the higher meaning of the State only becomes evident in the Church, that is: It is a temporal means for guiding man towards his supernatural end.

30. Other Christians also believe that the State is derived from the divine moral world order. The moral commandments, which are written in the consciences of all men, are to be realised in the State. The State serves the divine purpose precisely when it tries to realise the ideals of humanity, freedom, equality and universal well-being, and when it guarantees to all men the most favourable external conditions for their free self-development.

31. Those who hold a third view lay special emphasis upon the connection between the State and the nation in which the nation is regarded as the predominating form of social life, established by God Himself. In this view the nation is conceived as the social form of human life which transcends all others. The State is the organisation of the national community and it is the agent by which its historical mission is achieved. Since by its sovereignty it protects and furthers the undisturbed development of the distinctive character of the nation it must be recognised by the Christian Church as an instrument of the divine will becoming visible in history.

32. A fourth view draws special attention to the element of coercive force in the State, and to the radical disintegration which continually threatens the community, owing to the presence of human sinfulness and social evil. The State is regarded as a dyke erected to keep out the floods of chaos, as a harsh and unavoidable method used by the divine will, by means of which a comparatively peaceful and humane life is

made possible. It is part of the paradox of the State that with its exercise of force it seems to be absolutely opposed to the Christian virtues of love, humility and gentleness, and yet that it must be accepted as an excellent instrument of the sovereign will of God for the prevention of disaster. The authority and legal order of the State is the one fixed point, in the fallen world, on which the whole social order depends.

(e) The Dual Character of Political Loyalty

33. From what has already been said it is evident that the Christian attitude to political life is twofold. Believing that political sovereignty is intended to be used in God's service Christians take part in the development of the community by prayer, obedience and willing co-operation. In the present world situation, however, it is just as important to lay emphasis on the other aspect of the question—namely, on the necessity for positive criticism and the possibility of disobedience for conscience' sake. When Christian men and women, after they have taken counsel together in a spirit of fellowship under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, have reached the conviction that a State is exceeding its divine powers, whatever form of constitution and ideology it may use, it must be requested to modify its claims and it must be subjected to criticism.

(f) The State and Forms of the State in Christian Thought

34. The attitude of the Christian religion to the State is both positive and critical. It is contrary to the Christian faith to deny and depreciate the value of the State, because this view distorts the fact of sin and ignores the necessity for the order of law and control which this requires. On the other hand, it is also contrary to the Christian view to deify the State, because this view ignores the sovereignty of God. Both these attitudes have one common element, that is, confidence in the capacity of man, either as an individual or as a group, to achieve his own salvation.

35. The Christian faith is able to take a positive attitude to the State without considering whether the State acknowledges the relevance of the Word of God for the political sphere, and thus, as a Christian government, supports and protects the Church, or whether it is indifferent or hostile to the Church (Romans XIII). At the same time, however, faith is always critical of the State, for two reasons: (a) there

is always the danger that by its connection with the State the Church may become entangled in the world; (b) because the indifference, and even the hostility, of the State to the Church signifies a denial of the divine claim to rule life as a whole, both of individuals and of nations.

36. The Christian faith adopts the same positive and critical attitude towards those forms of the State which make a special claim to be in accordance with the divine revelation. This applies both to the principle of monarchy, with its appeal to the principle of authority, and to the principle of democracy, with its appeal to the ideas of equality and human dignity. An attempt has also been made to find a scriptural argument for the mixed kind of State, on the supposition that the tendency to misuse authority, inherent in all forms of power, owing to the presence of sin, can only be met by balancing the various elements which wield authority.

37. It is very important, and in accordance with that resolute love of truth which characterises the Christian attitude, that for the estimate of a State from the standpoint of the Christian faith the actual situation should be taken into account, that is, the extent to which the State is able to check and control the forces of evil, and to establish a just order of law and freedom for the service of the Christian community. This is far more important than the constitution of a particular form of State and the construction of its underlying ideology, even though it may be influenced by Scriptural ideas. For all confidence in forms is a kind of legalism, which leads to self-righteousness. The fact that Christians hold such varied views about the problem of the form of the State is largely due to the fact that they have been compelled to make decisions in the midst of the concrete conditions of definite historical situations; it also arises from the temptation to give the authority of an abstract and universal rule to the concrete and particular elements in an order which men desire either to establish or to defend.

38. Since law is an essential element of the State—according to an almost universal conviction of the Christian Church—the demand for an order which protects law both against its failure to apply it, and against a wrong or arbitrary use of it, is justified. Here we are confronted by the problem of the so-called 'Law-State;' that is, the legal order of a state in which the legal sphere of the individual is determined by law, that is, by special legislation which has been set up either with the help of the representatives of the people, or of the nation, or by some body to which this task has been

delegated, and is protected by independent organs for the administration of justice. But even this justification is not in itself a Christian demand, since the essential element consists in the kind of legal order which is actually realised, and also because it is possible to exaggerate the principles of the Law-State as an individualistic demand which is opposed to the welfare of the community as a whole. Here, too, the Christian attitude is both positive and critical.

B. The Tasks of the State and Christian Responsibility

39. The revelation of God in Christ does not only include an argument for the State as a social institution; it throws a peculiar light upon the wide sphere of the tasks of the State, and gives a new understanding of political responsibility which struggles for fulfilment in conflict with opposing motives and aims. It cannot, however, be denied that the Church of the present day has no clear understanding—based upon the realism of faith and upon concrete experience—of the real meaning of its message for this important sphere of human life. In most countries at least, the Church has paid far too little attention to the question: What new light does the fact that in Christ "all things have become new" throw upon the questions of social justice, civil responsibility, the national ethos, the various conflicting political ideals, and how does it give a new direction to our practical attitude? The experiences of Christian individuals and groups in their various callings as statesmen, judges, officials, soldiers, etc., and in their duties as simple citizens, with larger or more restricted political rights, have rarely been utilised for the political ethos of the Church as a whole. The complexity of the life of the State in the world of the present day, the deeply ingrained compromise with the non-moral or irreligious conception of political matters, and not less the uncertainty and division in the Christian attitude, make it extremely difficult to throw any ethical light on the countless problems which confront man in the State, and to give pastoral counsel to the bewildered conscience. But in this situation, in which it is becoming increasingly evident that non-Christian forces wish to suppress Christian influence upon political life, the Church must accept fresh responsibility for the political sphere, and with new earnestness it must seek to follow Him who is the Way, the Truth and the Life, even in the complicated sphere of political operations and functions.

40. Without going into too much detail, we would simply draw attention to three sets of problems which are of peculiar

importance for the Christian conscience: the exercise of force; Christian responsibility for the maintenance of the legal system; the task of the State in reference to morality and the philosophy of life as a whole.

(a) The Exercise of Force in the Political Sphere

41. Throughout history as a whole in principle the Church has acknowledged the State as an order willed by God. In so doing she has sometimes laid more stress upon the fact that it is the task of the State to give an obligatory character to the natural impulse to create social order; at other times the Church has held that the main task of the State consists in restraining the forces of evil which threaten the community with destruction. But the life of the State is never a pure reflection of the divine intention. Not only is the political order, consciously or unconsciously, misused by its supporters for selfish ends. In an extraordinary way, the actual or potential monopoly of social power which belongs to the State seems to be exposed to the danger of becoming the instrument of demonic forces. It is true, of course, that the State, however it came into being and whatever motives may prevail within it, does create a certain order and stability, and in so doing, whether it intends it or not, it serves the good of the whole. But this concentration of power constantly tends to become distorted and to end in tyranny and caprice, and in the ruthless maintenance of the existing distribution of social and cultural privileges.

42. The most difficult problem for the Christian conscience in political life lies in the question of force, used as a means of imposing the political will of a ruler upon all who oppose him. This conflict between Christian love and the use of force comes out in all its particular intensity and tragedy in the fact of war. The great extension of the activity of the State, and the dependence of man, both in his personal life and in his economic existence, on political factors, which this involves, in addition to the methods of influencing the masses which are provided by modern technique, have made it possible for the State in a quite new way to subject its citizens, not only to physical pressure, but also to moral and spiritual pressure. The possibility of suppressing those who think differently from the authorities, and the forcible imposition of a definite type of morality and of general outlook on life, the terribly increased efficiency of the use of force in modern war, with its extension to the civil population, make it urgently necessary that

Christians throughout the whole world should think out afresh the traditional doctrine of the "sword" of the State, and the question of the legitimacy and the limits of the use of force.

43. The necessity for the use of force, however difficult and morally questionable it may be, must, however, be admitted in principle, for without it the State would not be able to maintain the system of law and order which it protects. But there is much considered difference of opinion on the question whether certain kinds of force are, under all circumstances, forbidden to the Christian, and at what point, in concrete instances, the line should be drawn; these differences come out particularly clearly in opinions about war. But in spite of these differences, there is a settled Christian conviction that the use of force, however unavoidable it may be for the fulfilment of the distinctive tasks of the State, is in itself absolutely opposed to the love commandment, and that it can only be used in the certainty of divine forgiveness. It is, therefore, part of the political responsibility of the community to watch the ends for which the State uses its power, and also to see that the use of force is reduced to a minimum, and that it is only used as an *ultima ratio*. Further, it should be insisted that the exercise of force, apart from exceptional instances of extreme emergency, should take place within the framework of a law which is universally valid, and should remain the exclusive monopoly of the organs of the State, in order that it should not become the instrument either of caprice or of the private and collective lust of power.

(b) The Maintenance of Law and Justice as a Christian Concern

44. The monopoly of power and the application of force by the State is, according to Christian conviction, not an end in itself. It is subordinate to the claim of God to be sovereign Lord, and is to be used for His purposes. The message of the Old and the New Testaments, as well as the message of the Church throughout the centuries, expresses this conviction by saying that justice is the directive and limiting norm of all political conduct. In political discussions where one claim is opposed by another, what matters finally is the justice of God and His claim. This fundamental conviction leads to far-reaching conclusions. It relegates all political and social conflict to a secondary plane, and removes its sting because it leaves the question of results to the hidden decree of God. A legal system is a good gift of God. At the same time two points must be borne in mind: all law which has been

created by man must be regarded as something transitory; the struggle for a better righteousness, in all spheres of life, must be regarded as an absolute duty.

45. From the Christian point of view there is no agreement about the content of law and justice. The universal weakening of traditional conceptions of right and wrong, the hypocritical concealment of selfish interests by an appeal to justice, the careless way in which moral and legal ties are ignored in all the great questions of national and international politics, make this impotence of the Christian message all the more regrettable, and must be regarded as a summons to fresh thought on these matters, and, above all, to repentance.

46. For many Christians, justice as a political norm consists in giving to every man his due in his actual situation and his actual need. The principle of the *suum cuique*, and the norms of natural law which can be derived from it, are regarded as the standard for the legal order of the community, both in the relation of the citizens to one another and also in the relation between the State and its citizens. This principle of natural law which is struggling to be realised in the legal organisation of the community, is derived from the divine law which inspires and holds together the whole order of the universe. Justice, therefore, can never mean the mere affirmation of existing social and economic conditions. In the dynamic of the course of history the eternal order of the divine justice is ever struggling for fresh expression. Therefore the maintenance of law and order means an unceasing adjustment to the eternal order of law, and this also means a constantly renewed adjustment of the various social rights and duties for the sake of the common good.

47. Other Christians, however, would deny that this attempt to interpret justice in terms of the *suum cuique* throws any light upon the specifically Christian conception of law and order. Rather, they say, we must seek the criteria for Christian judgment and action in political matters in the revealed will of God. In so doing many would seek to find decisive standards in the instructions and statements of the Bible, above all in the Ten Commandments. Others lay more emphasis upon the paradoxical and indeed antithetical relation between the principle of justice and that self-sacrificing love which Christ has revealed in his life and death as the will of God. They regard the law—as a definite way of ordering the relation between individuals and groups in the community—primarily as a barrier against human caprice and arrogance. Moreover, the legal system, in which spheres of power are clearly defined and

delimited, protects the institutions of the community and gives them stability, constancy, the power of planning for the future, and security, and thus saves them from the danger of anarchy. Finally, the critical principle of justice which is ever at work within the law, is a vital element, ever striving for fresh expression, which never gives up the attempt to improve the legal system. But even justice is not the ultimate, but the penultimate element in political life. Its secret aim (which it can never attain) is that fellowship of divine love where there is no adjustment of rights and claims, because surrender and mutual service is regarded as the supreme law. But this does not mean that the legal order is superfluous for the Christian. Since he is still a sinner, he needs it as a help and as a barrier. The sovereignty of Christ in and through his Church transcends, it is true, all earthly legal orders, but at the same time it penetrates into them with its sanctifying and transforming influence. Hence the hidden meaning of the order of law is only fulfilled where the many difficult tasks and responsibilities of political life are subordinated to the command of the living and holy God, for "love is the fulfilment of the law."

(c) The Task of the State in the Common Life of the Community

48. Another question, which has become increasingly urgent in the State of the present day, is that of the responsibility of the State for the cultural life of the community, in the widest sense of the word. State control in questions of culture and national morality is no new phenomenon. The ancient *Polis* is a typical example of this view of the State. On the contrary, we ought to be able to maintain that the partial release of these spheres from State control within the liberal state represents something new in political history. It is in any case an incontestable fact that the contemporary State is not content merely to protect the varied life of the community, by means of its political and legal organisation, but it claims the right to direct the life of the nation in mind and heart, along definite lines. It is of course evident that this only happens in varying degrees. In one country, for instance, the State will leave considerable scope for the development of the cultural life, and for discussions about the spiritual and moral bases of the community, on the presupposition that the homogeneity of the community will itself regulate extreme convictions and will protect the community against the dangers of an inward collapse. In another country the State will step in deliberately in order to preserve at least a minimum of uniform moral and spiritual foundations. Finally, in other

countries all conflict of opinion will be entirely suppressed, and the State itself will stand forth as the champion of an exclusive philosophy of life and national morality.

49. This development confronts the Church with a very serious difficulty, since it endangers its own possibility of helping to further the moral and religious development of the community in its own distinctive way. It cannot be a matter of indifference to the Church—both on account of its own position as well as on account of the State—whether the State regards it as its function merely to protect and assist the cultural life of the community, or whether it claims the right to monopolise popular education, public opinion, the character training of its citizens, etc. Nevertheless it must be admitted that the attitude of the Church to this important problem, which concerns the spiritual effectiveness of the national community, and its own freedom to render public service, is very uncertain and obscure. Here, however, the Church is faced with the following urgent question : Is she willing to allow—without protest—the State to develop into a secularised church, with a world-view of its own, or is she ready to fulfil her responsibility to the State by reminding the latter of the limits to its power ? The search for a special ethos of the State, whether national or universal, arose after the Christian conception of authority had lost its validity owing to the widespread development of secularism; for in the long run no State can continue to exist simply as an authority, or for merely utilitarian reasons. The immense complexity of this situation makes it impossible for us to try to describe in any further detail the Christian understanding of the task of the State in the spheres of morality, world-outlook and religion. All that we can do at this point is to indicate the urgent need for Christian thinkers to gain clearer views of their political responsibility.

C. The Limits of the Sphere of the State in Sovereignty and in Influence, and the Problem of Freedom

(a) The Urgency of the Question

50. The fact of the existence of the Church within this world means that all earthly and secular claims cannot go beyond a certain point. It is not surprising, therefore, that this question of the limits of the State has been continually raised, from time to time, within the history of Christianity, although with varying intensity, and from different angles, at different periods. There is no doubt that this question has not

only become acute but that it has been greatly intensified by the totalitarian tendencies of the present day. In this situation it is extremely important that the attention of the whole of Christendom should be directed towards the dangers which menace humanity at this point. It is also important that the great complexity of this phenomenon, and the lack of uniformity and uncertainty of the Christian position, should be made quite clear, because only so can we find a way for effective Christian action.

51. The struggle to establish the totalitarian state, which leads even the Church into great difficulties, shows plainly that in the contemporary world this question of authority and freedom, of the limits of political responsibility, has become a question of extreme gravity. The point at which the conflict between the Church and the totalitarian tendencies of the State becomes inevitable is reached when these efforts at expansion take the form of a 'myth,' that is, when they become a religion. The totalitarian myths claim that they are able to show man a new way of salvation. But they also desire to force man to accept this way of salvation, whether by influencing public opinion or by indirect coercion. The State's attitude to the Church is twofold: in some cases it persecutes her; in others it tries to persuade the Church to submit to its influence and to accept and promulgate its philosophy of life.

52. It must be admitted that on this burning question the Church does not take a clear position. At this point the fundamental differences in the understanding of the individual and the community, the social function of the State, the relation between Christian freedom and the general human conception of freedom, become very evident. We must therefore be content merely to indicate the most important questions, and the attempts which have been made to answer them, as a starting point for the discussion.

(b) The Freedom of the Church in its Different Functions

53. When we think of the freedom of the Church and especially of the relation between Church and State, in accordance with the habits of thought of earlier days, we tend first of all to think of the contrast between a State Church and a Free Church, of the organic and legal connection between Church and State, and of the measure of state supervision of the churches. This way of regarding the problem lasted

so long as the State accepted the existence of the Church and the Christian faith as such, even though this was usually in the form of a distinct confession. But after the State, owing to its secularization, had assumed a completely neutral or coldly indifferent attitude to the Christian faith and to the Churches, whether this was expressed in the positive rejection of the Christian Faith or of the churches, or in the defence of an independent ethos of the State, which brought it into conflict or competition with the churches, the questions of *jura in sacra* and *jura circa sacra* sank to a level of secondary or subordinate importance. Hence they are not discussed in this memorandum, because the fundamental question of the relation of the Christian faith, the Church and the Christian Community on the one hand, and the State on the other, is predominant. The problems of the legal relation between Church and State are not very suitable for an oecumenical study, since this relation has been very strongly influenced by the historical development and the political situation of particular countries. Although the dogmatic position of particular churches may be of great significance for the legal relation to the State (for instance, it may exclude a close organic relation with the State), yet it is a fact, that, according to their varying historical development, the churches of almost all denominations (if we look at the so-called Christian countries as a whole during the post-Reformation period) display two kinds of relation with the State: on the one hand, there are those which —in the form of a State Church, or National Church—are closely connected with the State; on the other hand, some churches are almost or entirely free from State control. Here, therefore, we are only concerned with the freedom of the Church which is necessary for its own existence, regardless of the fact whether the Church is in any way organically connected with the State, or is a free organisation, legally recognized, or even only tolerated by the State.

54. There ought to be general agreement upon the fact that the Church, as the body which proclaims the Gospel, and as the community in which freedom in God is a living reality, represents the ultimate boundary which is opposed to totalitarian tendencies of every kind. The presence of the Church prevents any attempt to build a community upon a purely secular basis. The Church is free in so far as it is true to its Lord; whether it be the secret temptation to substitute a new moral law for the free sovereign grace of God, or the claims of a self-sufficient State, and it must maintain this freedom against all the claims and temptations of the world.—Hence the freedom of the Church cannot be given to her from outside,

by the State. The utmost the State can do is to guarantee the existence of the Church as a corporate body, and to provide it with legal protection. When this takes place the Church will gratefully accept it as a conscious or unconscious tribute of the political authorities to the sovereignty of its Lord. But when this freedom is restricted, the conflict between Church and State becomes acute. For the Church demands freedom to proclaim the Gospel to all mankind, and in all spheres of life, not for its own sake, but because it has received this commission from God, who is also Lord of the State.

55. This freedom of the Church, which in case of necessity it must also assert against the encroachment of the State, includes all the functions which are absolutely necessary if it is to carry out its own commission. It is this public character of the Church which makes the whole problem so difficult. Secret communion with God in prayer and worship cannot be attacked by the State, but the public proclamation of the Gospel and its application to the whole sphere of Christian life can be restricted and hindered by the State in various ways.

56. First in importance comes the public proclamation of the Christian message. Since this message lays bare the self-assertion of the world and its denial of its Creator, and proclaims the new salvation wrought by God in Christ, it is directed to mankind as a whole. Hence the Church is forced to use all the different methods for making public communications by speech and in print, by the use of the press, the wireless, etc. Inseparably connected with this is the demand for the common practice of worship and for the right of assembly for ecclesiastical purposes in addition to the time of ordinary public worship. Here foreign missions should be mentioned as an additional form of this fundamental function of the Church.

57. The religious discharge of this task pre-supposes that the Church is able to regulate its external forms of Church order and administration according to its own principles, whether with or without the understanding and support of the State authorities.

58. In the world of the present day, where a secularised community is severing itself from Christian influence both in its methods and in its standards, it is of decisive importance for the future of the Church that it should be allowed to bring up and educate its own members in the spirit of Christianity. No longer does the Church demand privileges

from the State; in many places the one aim of the Church is to secure a minimum of actual freedom.

59. The sphere of freedom controlled by the Church also includes its service of love to those who suffer need—the sick, the oppressed, and, in addition, its care for and its co-operation—by means of its members—in the transformation of the social order in the light of the divine will.

(c) Human Freedom

60. It is generally admitted, even though for different reasons and with certain reserves, that this freedom of the Church is a fact, and at the same time a task which must be ever realised afresh. Is it then a matter of indifference to the Church how the burning problem of " the State and freedom " is solved in the family and in science, in ethics and in public opinion? Has the Church any special insight into the distinctive character and the conditions of human freedom in general? What is the responsibility of the Church when human dignity is trodden under foot? when truth and law are made subject to utilitarian aims? or when the State enslaves countless numbers of human beings according to its own arbitrary will? This question is being asked to-day with the greatest seriousness and urgency by Christians and non-Christians alike. Here the point at issue is the Christian doctrine of man. The answer to this question of the freedom and the dignity of man is so important because it determines the attitude of the Church to all political measures which do not directly touch the exercise of its own functions. At this point Christian opinion is greatly divided. For the practical purposes of this memorandum, three distinct conceptions held by Christian groups at the present time may be indicated.

61. For many Christians the unfettered development of personality constitutes the starting point for all thought about these questions. The State exists for the sake of the free human being. Its part in the life of the community is merely subsidiary, that is, it makes something possible which human imperfection could not reach by its own unaided efforts. The independence of the person, and freedom to perfect himself according to his own immanent law, constitutes the decisive boundary of the State. Since human personality is the highest good in history, all political and legal measures which injure personal life are unjust. This inherent freedom of every human being is in no way denied by the message of the Church. On the contrary it is confirmed, since the Gospel itself proclaims very clearly the supreme value of the individual soul. In

consequence the Church must not only preserve its own freedom within the political order but it must also see to it that the State does not restrict the liberties of the person, of the family, of the economic order, and of the various cultural and other associations more than is absolutely required for the common good. Since man never lives as an isolated individual, the freedom of his person is inseparably connected with the freedom of the associations in which he lives and moves and has his being.

62. Other Christians, however, hold the opposite view; they are convinced that there are no specifically Christian reasons and standards for defining the limits of the sphere of the State, apart from the essential tasks of the Church itself. Christian freedom is an inward or eschatological freedom; it is not concerned with the extent in which the State extends its claims over the sphere of social life. The freedom of the natural man, and his subordination to the commandments of the State, is the responsibility of the political authorities, whose decisions the Church neither can nor ought to question. The development of the economic order, for instance, and the legislation which controls the situation among national and racial minorities, are matters which belong to the political sphere alone. To appeal to the law of love at this point would mean a political and religious confusion of standards which would be quite impossible. The Church has no authority, in the name of the Gospel, to require or to demand any rights for man or for the community over against the State. This, however, does not mean that the State knows no restrictions, but its limits are not to be defined from the point of view of the Gospel or from that of the individual, they are determined by the responsibility of the State to order and to protect the life of the community. Although the Church has no right to interfere with matters which are the concern of the State, it is its duty to care for all who are oppressed and persecuted, in a spirit of love and compassion.

63. Other Christians would, on the whole, deny that the Christian message can be conceived as a confirmation or higher development of the liberties of the natural man. Freedom is not a good in itself. Everything depends upon the kind of freedom and the way in which it is exercised, namely, whether it is used for self-assertion or in an irresponsible manner—(which is the natural tendency of man)—or for the service of one's neighbour. The State is no danger to human freedom if it fulfils its legitimate task. On the contrary, it is a guardian of human freedom, protecting it against the effects of ruthless caprice and the disintegration which this produces.

IV. THE IMMEDIATE TASKS OF THE CHURCH

(a) The Dynamic of Faith as the Motive for Christian Action in the Actual Political Sphere

64. The light which faith throws upon the question of the State calls for decision. These truths are existential in character; they challenge man as a whole. To the extent in which they proceed from the operative Word of God they urge us forward to responsible action. This raises the question: If we are to put into practice the truths which we have just come to perceive concerning our political responsibilities, *what* are we to do? and *how* are we to do it? What ways and means are already at our disposal? or must we create new ones? Is it possible to set up a concrete programme of action which will show how Christian love ought to work out in political life? And if this *is* possible, what form will this programme take?

First of all, it is supremely important to emphasise the fact that the primary defect of the Church and of political life at the present day is not the lack of a programme of action but the decline of faith and the lack of selfless love. Since God is Lord of the State everything—yes, absolutely everything—depends upon this central fact, upon living communion with God in unreserved trust and obedience. The more that the Christian community receives from God strength, confidence, daring courage, joy and liberty, the more will the powers of the eternal world radiate from it into the world, and the more spontaneously and effectively will its influence be felt in the political sphere, precisely because its strength is derived from the supra-political sphere. The more clearly the Church proclaims that Christ has conquered all the principalities and powers of this world, and that He wills to be victorious in the life of every man and woman, the more will the Church help the world in two directions: first of all, it will make it easier for each generation to deal with its own political problems as they occur; secondly, the political sphere as a whole will be seen in a new and supra-mundane light; in so doing it will be reduced to its proper level and its atmosphere will be sweetened and purified. If the sphere of politics is to be renewed we need renewed men and women. Hence it is the first and the central political task of the Church to ask the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ for a living faith in Himself. The community which is constituted by the Word and the Sacraments, the formation of living, missionary groups of Christian fellowship, in which life in God also becomes visible to the world—in spite of all the sinfulness and imperfection of Christians—all this is needed first of all before it is possible to have any " Christian politics " in the true sense of the word.

(b) The Necessity for Concrete Reflection upon these Questions

65. If the Church wishes to deal with the political situation of the present day in this spirit it will not be enough for it merely to follow the usual well-trodden paths with greater earnestness and fervour. Rather it will be challenged to reconsider and re-examine the presuppositions, the chief standards, the methods and the means which it has employed hitherto in thought and action concerning the sphere of politics. The chief purpose of this critical process of self-examination will be to enable the Church to free itself from the influence of secular standards and motives.

(c) The Service of the Church as a Guide in this Sphere

66. Since the problem of the political sphere has assumed a religious or semi-religious character, in its future thought and action the Church must pay special attention to all the particular difficulties and possibilities which it contains. In so doing, however, the Church will be aware of the limits within which it can act, and of the range of its influence. In all its efforts it cannot reckon on any help from outside. All it achieves will be done through the consciences of those whom it reaches with its message, and who receive this message with faith. It will accept the fact that masses of human beings are falling away from the Christian Faith, partly owing to religious indifference, and partly owing to the rise of new religions, with their appeal to the masses. In this situation the Church may, and indeed must, have the complete assurance, that to the extent in which it is really the Church of Christ, by its very existence it is making a vital contribution to the solution of the problem of community, which is engaging the attention of statesmen both in particular countries and in the world of nations as a whole. Through its members its influence extends beyond its own sphere. The Church sends men into public life who are protected against the extremist influence of political ideologies and utopias, with their belief in man's unaided powers, by their faith in their Lord and in the truth which He has revealed. Such people are protected against the dangers of disappointment and despair which assail those whose hopes are pinned to systems and theories which may break down, with a correspondingly disturbing effect upon the community. At the same time these Christian men have the courage, which they draw from their faith, to fight for justice wherever they may be placed within the political sphere. Thus in both these

directions, within the sphere of the particular Church, and in the œcumenical community, the Church will have to create new possibilities in order that through the permanent common work and conference of its members who are experts in these matters, guidance may be given for the concrete political problems of the present day which will prevent Christians from being misled by the prevailing ideologies and utopias, and at the same time will make it plain where Christian responsibility lies in the actual political sphere of the present day.

(d) The Struggle for Christian Freedom as an Oecumenical Responsibility

67. The predominating tendencies in the life of the State of the present day, at least from the point of view of the world as a whole, prove once again the deep Christian truth that the natural world finds it hard to tolerate the existence of the Church, and therefore that it constantly reacts against it, either by attempting to assimilate it, or, if the Church remains true to its commission, by raising difficulties, by keeping it at arms' length, or by an attitude of disdain, or even of persecution. Wherever the Church is being persecuted, or its public work and influence is being hindered by the power of the State, with loving intercession and active sympathy we ought to remember the difficult situation of Christians in many lands at this time. In other countries, on the contrary, the public work of the Church is recognised, or even gratefully affirmed by the political authorities. It would denote, however, a lack of realistic knowledge of the actual situation were we to overlook the fact that here too the political authorities, even where a positive attitude towards Christianity is expressed in the official recognition of a State Church — have little intention of clearing away existing hindrances to the free life and work of the Church, or they may even exhibit a tendency to create fresh hindrances, either through legislation and administrative measures, or by influencing public opinion. Thus we perceive a world-wide tendency to hinder or to suppress the freedom of the Church to proclaim publicly its good news in life and speech. This lays upon oecumenical Christendom a responsibility and a task which is of the most serious and urgent character. Christendom has no right merely to look on in passivity or indifference while in various countries, with the active co-operation or the silent approval of the political authorities, the service of the Church to the people is made

difficult or almost impossible, and those who confess Christ are silenced or persecuted. Oecumenical Christendom must gain a new sense of responsibility, claiming that everywhere the State ought to allow the Church sufficient room to work unhindered, even if it is not aware that only through the freedom of the Church can it secure the fulfilment of its own God-given task. This struggle to secure a greater sphere of influence for the Church within the present world of nations, should constitute one of the most important oecumenical tasks of the present day. In the common process of new reflection upon the central questions of the Christian faith, as well as upon all the problems connected with the relations between Church and State, the discharge of this task would bring in an element of firm and existential purpose. For in this struggle we are not concerned that the Church should assert its authority, or that it should merely seek its own stability; no, the one thing that matters is that the Church should be free to proclaim the Good News of Christ, without let or hindrance, in order that the nations may be saved, in accordance with the Commission given to the Church by its Lord (Mt. 28, 18-20).